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Enhance Communications and Outreach to Virginia's Veterans

1. **Objective:** To enhance communication and outreach to Virginia veterans by implementing a Tele-Vet System and making more use of social media.
2. **Background:**
 - The IRS has a taxpayer help line to assist taxpayers. This self-help system is known as *IRS Tele-Tax*. The system offers approximately 150 prerecorded messages covering a variety of tax matters and issues. Users can learn about various tax topics by using a touch-tone telephone.
 - The Department of Veterans Services (DVS) has been quite proactive in informing veterans of the resources available to them. Outreach and communications include public announcements; attendance at meetings and conferences; articles published in newspapers and magazines; and the DVS website, which features 27 main topics and 407 sub-topics. However, veterans without a computer cannot access this information.
 - DVS lacks the resources to effectively reach veterans by telephone or through social media.
3. **Discussion:**
 - Implementing a *DVS Tele-Vet System* would be a great way to reach veterans who do not have access to a computer.
 - Information available on the *DVS Tele-Vet System* should mirror as much as possible the information on the DVS website.
 - DVS should hire a contractor to design a menu-driven system that can be accessed from a touch-tone phone. The *IRS Tele-Tax* system should serve as a model for the *DVS Tele-Vet System*.
 - The estimated cost to develop the new system is \$150,000. In addition to this one-time cost, \$25,000 per year should be provided for operations and system maintenance.
 - DVS should better utilize social media to inform Virginia's veterans of the resources available to them.
 - Popular social media outlets include Facebook (900 million users), Twitter (140 million users), and LinkedIn (150 million users).
 - DVS lacks the staff resources to effectively reach even a fraction of these users. An additional \$20,000 per year for a wage employee would enable DVS to make better use of social media to reach Virginia veterans.
4. **Recommendation:** That the Governor enhance communications and outreach to Virginia veterans by:
 - a. Appropriating \$150,000 in FY14 (GF) to develop and deploy the *DVS Tele-Vet System*. Appropriate \$25,000 (GF) per fiscal year in FY15 and beyond for system operation and maintenance;
 - b. Appropriating \$20,000 (GF) annually for a wage employee to better engage Virginia veterans through social media.

Adopted
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